



NEWS RELEASE

October 13, 2002

Border Patrol Agents Involved in Shoot-out along Rio Grande *Agent Released from Hospital with Non-life threatening Injury*

EL PASO, Tx. – At approximately 4:30 p.m. Saturday, a Border Patrol Agent was shot in the leg by drug smugglers in a shoot-out approximately 70-miles east of El Paso, near Fort Hancock. Agents were pursuing marijuana drug load on Farm Road 192 in Hudspeth County when the narcotics smuggler approached the border and drove the vehicle into the Rio Grande. The smuggler then fled on foot into Mexico.

In an ambush-style fashion, gunfire then erupted from the Mexican side of the river as the two agents approached the U.S. side of the river levee. The agent, a female officer from Fort Hancock Station, was struck by a round that traveled through the service vehicle. Reports indicate that agents and the smuggling assailants exchanged extensive gunfire at the scene. Backup units of Border Patrol agents were immediately dispatched to the location to provide assistance. Mexican authorities were also notified.

“This time it was a close call,” El Paso Sector Chief Luis Barker said. “We will pull out all stops in this investigation in an effort to reduce the likelihood of agents being put in harm’s way in this manner,” he added.

The agent was airlifted to the R.E. Thomason Hospital for treatment for a gunshot wound and released late Saturday. At this time there are no indications that anyone else sustained injuries from the shootout.

A 2002 Ford F-350 pickup truck loaded with 1,901 pounds marijuana was recovered from the Rio Grande. Border Patrol agents say the value of the marijuana load is estimated at \$1.5 million. At this time no suspects in the shooting are in custody. The U.S. Border Patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Hudspeth County Sheriff Department, and Mexican officials are investigating the incident.

~ USBP ~

**Video of the shooting location available to all interested members of the media.